



Downtown apartment buildings, such as the Lansburgh above, provide higher-density residential opportunities in the Penn Quarter area.

2 Strategies and Recommendations

The Downtown Action Agenda is based on the idea that each element of the downtown’s economy and infrastructure reinforces the others. Housing, retail, arts, hospitality and office uses are integrated into an overall strategy. While each of the following sections focuses on one economic element, the Action Agenda seeks to weave them together into a comprehensive package that leverages their individual strengths.

Downtown as Residential Center

Downtown housing can be a significant catalyst for urban revitalization. Downtown residents are especially valuable because they increase pedestrian traffic and support shops, restaurants, cultural facilities, and businesses in the evening, on weekends, and during off-seasons, when office workers and visitors have gone home. Residents’ “eyes on the street” increase neighborhood security and their incomes bolster city tax revenues.

Within the Downtown Action Agenda study area, there are currently about 3,300 downtown housing units. This is just 26% of the 1982 Living Downtown Plan’s 12,500-unit target. The most pronounced shortfall is in the area south of Massachusetts Avenue.

Under current zoning, 2,100 new units south of Massachusetts Avenue and 5,500 units to its north could be built. Given this potential, and assuming the implementation of several new zoning incentives, downtown could accom-



There are many medium-density housing units adjacent to Downtown in the Shaw neighborhood.

Downtown Housing 2000			
Residential Units	Total Downtown	South of Massachusetts Avenue	North of Massachusetts Avenue
Existing (Current Supply)	3,300	1,500	1,800
New Planned ¹	850	850	0
New Required ²	4,350	650	3,700
New Public ³	2,400	600	1,800
Total (Future Supply)	10,900	3,600	7,300
Original Goal (total units)	12,500	5,400	7,100
Shortfall/Surplus	-1,600	-1,800	200
Note \1 Units in projects that have been programmed or publicly announced; \2 Units required by existing zoning or overlay requirements (including 500-unit residential bonus for FAR calculations in Mt. Vernon Triangle); \3 Units located on District-owned properties. These figures do not include an additional 400 potential housing units north of M Street in the Shaw community.			
Source: D.C. Office of Planning, D.C. Office of Tax and Revenue, EDAW, Inc.			

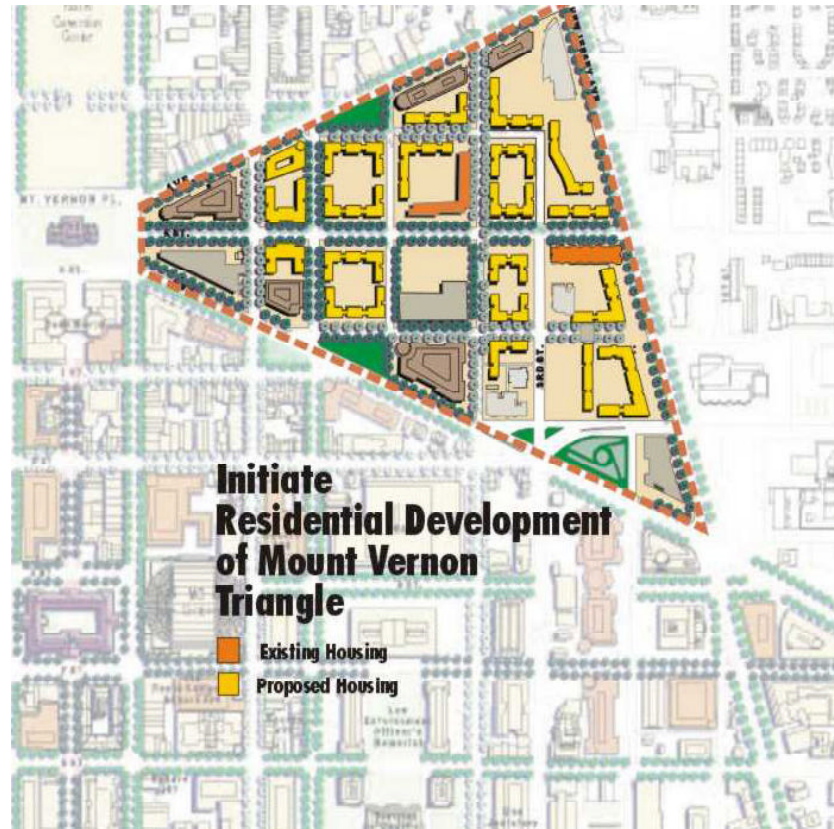
modate a total of nearly 11,000 total housing units. While this section addresses special areas in which to concentrate new residential communities, one key location for new housing south of Massachusetts Avenue is the existing convention center site, which offers three blocks of redevelopment opportunities. Based on conservative estimates, the 7,600 new units could produce a total return of more than \$30 million annually to the District.

Across the country, downtown living has become increasingly appealing to a new demographic seeking proximity to the jobs and cultural offerings of urban centers. In Washington, a number of major new residential projects reflect a growing sense of confidence in the downtown housing market. However, several impediments to housing development have been identified. These include technical difficulties in executing combined lot provisions of the zoning regulations, the need for large sites which provide a critical mass of units, and the significant cost of land and capital required for residential development.

Strategy One: Create an Urban Residential Neighborhood in Mount Vernon Triangle

Mount Vernon Triangle should be developed primarily as a new downtown residential neighborhood. As the last available and most appropriate location for a significant concentration of new Downtown housing, Mount Vernon Triangle has the potential to accommodate approximately 5,500 new housing units. Here, a lively, high-density neighborhood with a critical mass of residents would support nearby Downtown retail uses and serve as a transitional buffer to lower-density residential areas to the north.

Various land use plans and policies currently support the concentration of housing in Mount Vernon Triangle. However, the current density permitted here for commercial uses (3.5 FAR) is too intense to encourage appropriate residential development. (Once commercial office space is envisioned as a viable use, it becomes difficult to encourage residential development, which is viewed by financial institutions and developers as less proven in the downtown area). A number of actions are required to achieve the appropriate mix of residential and commercial space. First, new incentives should be made available to encourage private residential development and lessen institutional resistance. In addition, publicly owned land in the area should be developed for residential use at the maximum density permit-



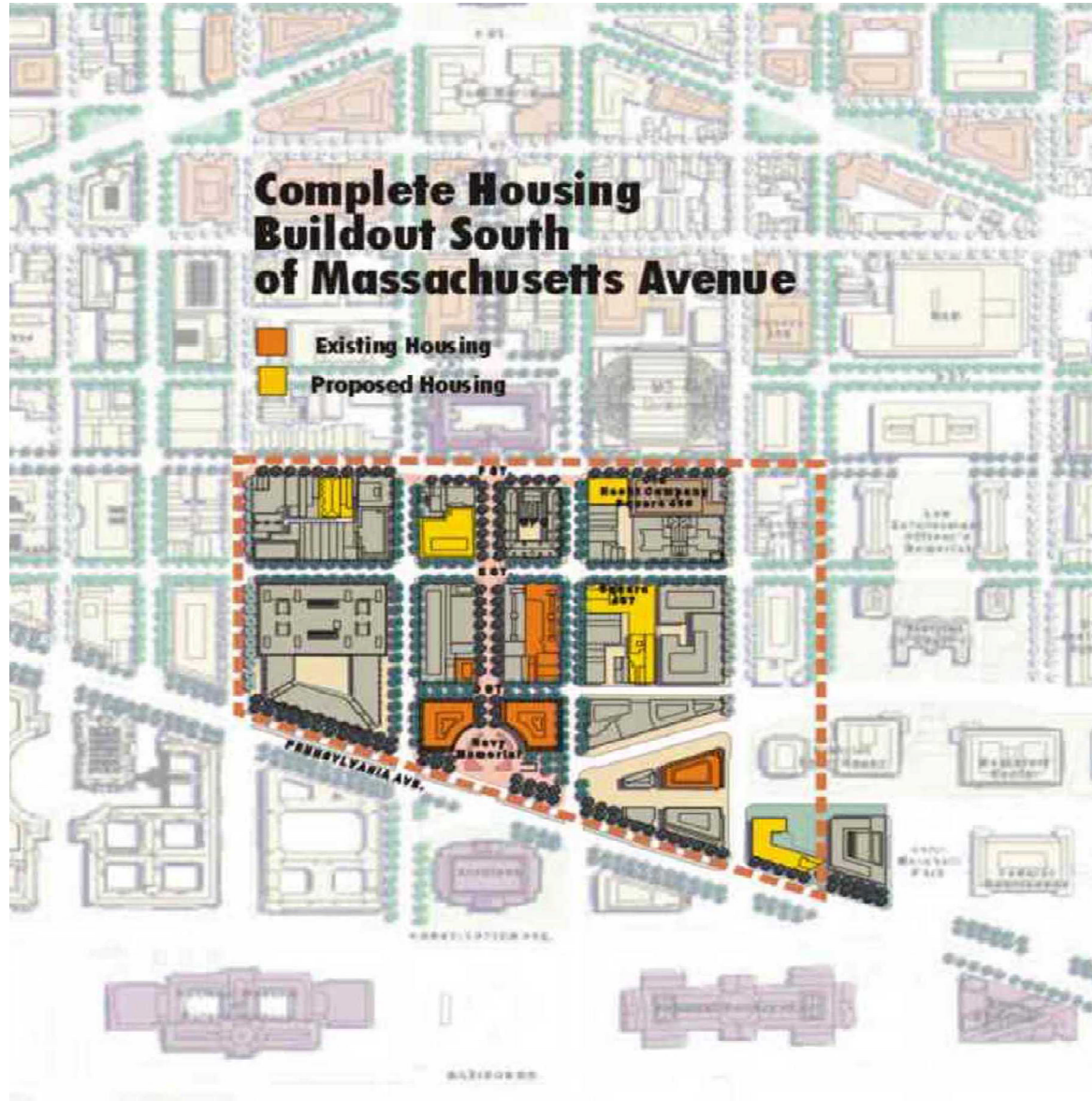
ted. Finally, public space improvements should be authorized, the DDD overlay consistently applied, and the amount of commercial office development allowed in Mount Vernon Triangle reduced. With a concerted effort, a projected 5.5 million square feet of residential space and 1.9 million square feet of commercial space could be developed within the Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood.

The Downtown Action Agenda envisions Mount Vernon Triangle as a residential area containing primarily apartments and condominiums, with ground floor retail centered along the broad expanse of K Street. A locally oriented residential land use pattern would support a broad mix of commercial uses, including convenience retail, small offices and commercial arts uses. Larger uses could locate at the outer edges of the Triangle, especially along New York Avenue. Adaptively reused historic buildings should enrich the streetscape and well designed new parks and open spaces should provide focal points within the Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood

Key Actions: Develop a set of housing criteria - density, height, footprint - to create a premiere urban neighborhood; Issue RFPs for key sites to set a standard of excellence for residential development; Adopt tax abatements; Recommend Comprehensive Plan amendments to support housing Downtown.



Residential and retail uses (top) and apartments with ground-floor retail (above) on Wisconsin Avenue



Strategy Two: Complete Housing Build-Out South of Massachusetts Avenue

Downtown housing should be concentrated in key locations to strengthen existing Downtown neighborhoods and initiate new residential areas. Specifically, housing development should be directed to Penn Quarter to build upon the residential neighborhood around Market Square.

Residential development with supporting restaurant, convenience, and cultural uses should be added south of Massachusetts Avenue. This can be accomplished in part by applying residential zoning requirements on public sites and by eliminating the timing requirements for transferable development rights under the combined lot program for private sites. Publicly owned or controlled locations suitable for residential development include Square 491 (DOES building), Square 457 (former DC Space site), and the Mather Building.



Retail buildings have been adaptively reused for residences in Penn Quarter.

Key Action: Adopt a pro-housing regulatory package that includes zoning flexibility to support new residential development

Strategy Three: Strengthen and Protect the Existing Shaw Community

The neighborhood of Shaw, generally defined as the area north of M Street between New York and Massachusetts Avenue, is a vital community which contains primarily townhouses and medium-sized apartment buildings. Unfortunately, there also are approximately 400 vacant housing units and numerous empty lots scattered throughout the area. With the arrival of the new convention center and associated increases in property value and development pressure on vacant sites, the Shaw community is likely to experience change.

To strengthen the existing community and help buffer the effects of new development forces, infill development, physical improvements to housing stock, historic preservation tax credits, and retail enhancement programs should be implemented. A strategic plan should be developed to utilize historic preservation and community development funds made available by the new convention center development. New construction should be sensitive in use, scale, and density to the existing residential fabric. At the edge of Shaw closest to Downtown, in the blocks located between Mount Vernon Square and M Street (including Squares 341, 369, and 450), approximately 500 housing units could be constructed as part of a mixed-use development. To minimize effects of increased housing costs on current and long-time residents, home ownership assistance and low-cost home improvement programs should be quickly expanded and aggressively promoted.

Key Actions: Expand Enterprise Zone for Housing; Create a strategic plan to utilize historic preservation and community development funds available in Shaw.

Strategy Four: Connect Downtown Economic Growth to Local Residents



The benefits of an expanding downtown economy include new jobs and a stronger tax base. New retail, entertainment, the convention center and hotel developments create service-sector jobs, many of them entry-level. Job placement and training activities should be implemented to link residents to new opportunities.

In addition to encouraging preferred uses on key sites, resources generated by development can be harnessed to contribute to housing and other improvements to local neighborhoods.

Key Actions: Dedicate funds for a downtown job training and placement program; Establish a downtown neighborhood housing trust fund.



Shaw residences require protection from intrusive commercial uses.